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The applicability of linguistics to the work of the second language teacher is stressed here. The goals of language teaching are discussed, as well as the teacher's need to be competent in three areas--his subject, educational psychology, and teaching methodology. The pertinence of different linguistic theories and subfields to competence in these three areas is suggested. (AF)

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Educational Institutions and Professional and Industrial Organisations are invited to send details of conferences, courses, seminars that may be of interest to our readers.

A Plea for More Linguistics in Second-Language Teaching

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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by Raphael Gefen

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While my own field of experience is English as a second language abroad (Israel), I would argue that the issues raised in this paper are also applicable to the teaching of foreign languages in this country and even more so to the teaching of English to immigrant pupils. The urgency of my plea is not only a reflection on the innocence and ignorance of many teachers regarding the very existence of the discipline of "linguistics" (as distinct from philology, etymology and other language-studies whose contribution to teaching can only be marginal), but is also a protest against the anti-linguistic bias of some leading educators and journals. It is becoming quite the fashion in pedagogical circles to point to the limitations in applying linguistics to language teaching. You do find teachers and textbooks apparently trying to teach linguistics rather than the second language — the example I have in mind is an English textbook for first-year secondary school pupils in Tanzania. The chapters alternate between texts in very elementary English and detailed theoretical expositions of the main tenets of Professor Halliday's "Scale and Category Grammer" — with all the technical terminology peculiar to that school. But while this kind of book is an object lesson in what not to do, the vast majority of teachers and even textbook writers have little inkling of what linguistics can offer: and it behoves the small but growing band of Applied Linguists ("Pedagogolinguists"?) to indicate what linguistics can contribute rather than stress the admittedly possible pitfalls.

Indeed, it stands to reason that linguistics, the study of language, must by definition be able to give a great deal to the practical craft of teaching a language. First things first! No teacher worthy of his salt will talk about Recursive sentences or Morphophonemic change in the classroom, but all too many teachers teach clumsily, anecdotally, impressionistically and even wrongly through ignorance of how linguistics can help them. The anti-linguistic forces in the teaching profession (ably assisted by the well-meaning effort mentioned above) are strongly entrenched — the teacher must be reached in their despite. At the same time, progressive teachers have attended Summer Schools or evening courses in linguistics, hoping for the help which linguistics ought logically to be able to offer them, and have gone away disappointed, to return to the misrules of so many school grammars. They were disappointed because the lecturer gave them a potted history of the subject, a glossary of its abstract terminology and possibly an exposition of the major schools of thought; and the teacher did not see the relevance to his problems, nor was he shown it. It would be a grave injustice to the many excellent teacher-linguists to charge every such course with this inappropriate curriculum, but all too often it is the case. Naturally enough, a teacher who comes to a high-level academic course seeking immediate answers to his discipline troubles, lesson-preparation problems and perhaps his own inadequate knowledge of the subject will not be satisfied, but the general feeling of disillusion exists in far wider circles. Such courses for practising teachers must be concerned with the application of linguistics to language-teaching, although of course much useful basic information will be provided informally.

In fact, every Second-language teacher should realise he is an Applied Linguist . . . while also appreciating that

(1) his task is to teach language, not Linguistics or even Applied Linguistics;

(2) Language-teaching involves many fields of knowledge other than Linguistics.

On the Goals of Language-Teaching

The essential goal of Second-language teaching is to impart Competence in and Performance of the Target-language. By "Competence" I mean a knowledge of the structure of the Second-language (an "internalised grammar", to use the terminology of the Transformational school of linguistics) which will teach the learner how to understand and form sentences in the new language; by "Performance" is meant an ability to produce the actual sentences of the language — including the stylistic and "colloquial" deviations from the rules, which appear in the speech of any native. Competence and Performance go hand in hand. Competence completely without Performance is a logical impossibility, but an undue emphasis on Competence will produce the familiar figure of the pupil knowing more "grammar" (i.e. conscious formulation of the rules) than an educated native and yet being unable to order a cup of coffee. Performance alone will result in a "Learn the X Language in 24 Hours" victim who knows a few words and has learnt a tourist phrase-book by heart. Competence will no doubt exceed Performance — I do not think any but an outstanding pupil (unless he learns the Second-language in First-language conditions) will ever have a native Performance. But it should not be beyond the bounds of the possible to produce a near-native Competence which will enable the learner to manage in most situations.

While this is the *essential* goal of Second-language teaching, most pupils and teachers will not accept it as an end in itself — they see the Second-language as a means to a wider end. No one over-all purpose can be postulated, since the end envisaged will depend on the motivation of the pupil, and different pupils in the same class will have different motivations. All the same, it is clear that the teacher must put these interests in the forefront of his mind when planning his lessons and standing before his class: very little learning will take place if the pupil has no real motivation to learn.

Culture as a Goal?

Most educational programmes stress some general cultural goal in Second-language teaching, such a goal being of course extra-linguistic. Knowing a foreign language will facilitate cultural understanding and the broadening of horizons, but language-learning and cultural appreciation are two different processes. With most pupils, the cultural message can be transmitted most effectively in their own tongue. Much harm has in fact been done by this cultural emphasis. Not only are textbooks full of ennobling poems in a language far too difficult for the learner, but the teacher feels himself obliged to talk about the culture, which in most cases sooner or later leads to a lesson being given in the Mother-tongue about the customs of the Target-language country. There are ignorant and bigoted polyglots as well as informed and cultured monoglots.

There are, needless to say, culturally-loaded words and phrases whose meanings can only be deduced by knowing the cultural background; but most languages taught are those stemming from a largely common background. Again, for quite practical reasons, the actual content of the lessons might just as well be cultural material of the Target-language community and so can be interestingly different, but this is a purely methodological, pedagogical consideration. There is no intrinsic need for an English textbook in Africa or Asia to be about England or the U.S.A. — unless the students are intending immigrants or tourists.

There is, however, a cultural-cum-linguistic value in teaching a Second-language: an insight into language as a human activity in general and a deeper understanding of one's own language through contrast with a second language. This is, I think, a goal of Second-language teaching which can be expressed in thoroughly linguistic terms, a genuinely linguistic goal which can be pursued at all levels of instruction. As in all things, there is an inherent danger in the obvious temptation for the

teacher to tell interesting stories in the pupils' Mother-tongue about Language in general and to proceed along all manner of linguistic byeways. The detailed explanations should be left to the Mother-tongue teacher (there should indeed be close co-operation in a school between all language teachers), but the different roles of the First-and Second-language teachers are broadly clear.

Which Linguistics?

The teacher knows (1) his subject, (2) educational psychology, and (3) teaching methodology. The Second-language teacher, in other words, must know his subject-matter: he must not only have a thorough knowledge of the Second-language, but he must also know the pupils' Mother-tongue and as much as possible about language in general. This is where Linguistics will be of the most immediate and obvious importance: it will tell him what to teach. Linguistics will provide a description of the language: the rules of grammar, the pronunciation and meaning of the vocabulary. It will do the same for the Mother-tongue and will likewise explain the nature of language in general. I confess this is more a programme than an actuality: no language has yet been fully described and the partial descriptions which do exist differ as a result of their ideological commitment to the various schools of linguistic thought. But teachers cannot abdicate their responsibilities until the linguists have finished their work and/or composed their differences: we have to use the materials at hand, compromise where necessary, utilise our healthy intuition and in general adopt a policy of eclectic empiricism.

Of course, grammar rules exist already in their over-abundance, but Linguistics will give the teacher accurate synchronic descriptions instead of the non-linguistic, quasi-linguistic and even pseudo-linguistic phraseology of so many textbooks.

This description will apply at different levels and within different contexts. If the class as a whole consists of aspiring members of a certain profession, whose motivation is strictly vocational, linguistics will describe the particular Register or Style required. Sociology will define the profession and linguistics will provide its language. At the moment, these sociolinguistic studies are rather unscientific, since most sociologists use language in order to define the social group, but one hopes that more refined techniques will remove the present circularity.

A more serious issue is the fact that different linguistic theories will generate different linguistic descriptions, as mentioned above. The whole dichotomy of Competence and Performance is bound up with the prognoses of rival theories and in the end the teacher has to decide which theory to associate with. In terms of the production of actual linguistic items, the final sentences, these differences tend to disappear, but any attempt to teach underlying rules inevitably brings up the question of Transformational, Structural or Traditional grammar, to name but three approaches. Much as I know that purists will be shocked by the suggestion, I feel that in terms of classroom demands and aims a satisfactory compromise can be worked out. However, the teacher has simply got to know what the various schools believe in. This problem of "ideological allegiance" also enters into Psychology and Methodology — the teacher just cannot avoid the question if he is to do his job to his own and his pupils' satisfaction.

Rival Approaches in Psychology

With regard to educational psychology, the teacher must not only be aware of current ideas in learning theory but must be especially interested, obviously enough, in language-learning theory. Most work in this field has been done for First-language learning, but lessons are beginning to be drawn for Second-language teaching also. American scholars, such as Saporta, Valdman, Rivers etc, are trying to apply "Psychodevelopmental linguistics" to Second-language teaching.

Until the days of Transformational grammar, it was always assumed that linguistics had nothing very special to say on this point and could offer no guidance on how learning takes place. But its mentalistic premisses cause Transformational grammar not merely to have

something important to say about language learning, but by implication oblige rival schools of linguistics to define their own positions. Structuralism (the school of Bloomfield and his successors) considers language to be a set of habits and behavioural patterns, so the assumption follows that the pupil will learn according to the Behaviourist school of psychology, by Stimulus — Response — Reinforcement, the process Skinner has so successfully demonstrated with his rats and pigeons; Transformationalism supports the "innate ideas" school of psychology. Although it is difficult to see how a person can have "innate ideas" in or about a Second-language, the general inference is fairly clear — deductive learning by "internalizing a rule" rather than inductive generalization from examples.

The bridge discipline of Psycholinguistics can and does contribute a great deal to language-learning theory and practice, but one must also remember that language-learning is far more than "Applied Psycholinguistics", so that on many wider issues of educational psychology linguistics will continue to have nothing significant to say. And as a necessary conclusion, it is vital to recall that no one has satisfactorily explained how learning takes place in general and how a language is learnt in particular — so that we are still faced with no more than rival hypotheses.

Is there a linguistic Method?

The same situation obtains vis-a-vis methodology. The following facts should always be borne in mind:

(1) there is no one "Method" for language-learning, but a number of methods, none of which has ever been proved beyond doubt and other things being equal to be superior to others — such a lot depends on personality, motivation and environment;
(2) there are numerous tactics for classroom behaviour and for arousing interest which are beyond the "jurisdiction" of linguistics!
(3) there is the serious issue, bordering on linguistics, whether one considers that the Second-language is learnt in the same way as the Mother-tongue or not. The conclusion he comes to will affect his teaching method, but the issue still belongs more to the "Psychological" component of Psycholinguistics than to the "Linguistic".

However, linguistic theory will influence the teacher's presentation in a number of ways. If he is a Structuralist linguistically and so in all probability a Behaviourist psychologically, he will prefer the drilling of patterns associated with the so-called "Audio-Lingual" method or "Oral Approach". If he is a believer in traditional grammar, he will probably be a "cognitive" teacher, stressing the rule rather than the example; while if he is a Transformationalist he will prefer to show the connections and relations between sentence-types (active — passive, interrogative — declarative, etc.). Transformationalists and Structuralists would agree on emphasising the spoken language, since their common attitude to language as activity would make them more sympathetic to active methods. Most teachers of my acquaintance are "implicit transformationalists" — thus they teach the negative as a transformation (or "conversion" or some other name) of the positive.

Linguistics, therefore, has very much to say on *what* to teach, after the pupil, teacher or Educational Authority has decided *why* the Second-language should be taught; it has something to say on *how* the pupil learns and rather more to say on *how* to teach; and finally it has something to say on *when* to teach. The age when to start teaching a Second-language is a general psychological and educational issue and is not connected with linguistics as such. Similarly, the grading of material in the course is often dependent on factors of time, intelligence, teachability, etc. and so not on linguistic factors. But linguistics will be able to grade the material according to frequency of use; it will also be able to consider the sequence of presentation. Both Traditional and Transformational grammars would teach the Active before the Passive voice, since they consider the latter to be derived from the former. I do not suppose a Structuralist could order material in this way without sacrificing his principles. Naturally, educational factors would intervene and override the purely linguistic: the Interrogative simply has to be introduced quite early in the

course, despite its derived character (if viewed as a transformation of the corresponding declarative sentence).

Finally comes the question of Contrastive linguistics. The general trend today, over-riding theoretical differences between the linguistic factions, is in favour of contrasting the structures of the First and Second languages. Contrast comes into all three of our requisites for the teacher — it involves the description of both the languages concerned, it derives from a psychological standpoint which sees Mother-tongue interference as a major obstacle in Second-language learning, and it will be an ever-present factor in teaching strategy, including, inter alia, the use of some translation. The decision to use Contrastive techniques is therefore non-linguistic in origin, but part of the "Transfer" concept in the psychology of learning. Nevertheless, it is a main field of linguistic activity today. Many teachers, favouring the "Direct Method", are still opposed to Contrastive linguistics and place their faith in "error analysis" as the means to overcome First-language interference.

One can sum up the argument as follows: the Second-language teacher is a teacher of pupils as well as a teacher of language. In this second capacity, linguistics can contribute a very great deal and is not being used enough — every language teacher is ipso facto an Applied linguist. But I would also maintain that even in the first capacity, linguistics does have a certain auxiliary role to play.

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